

Growing Rainforest Plants

- Many rainforest trees are much smaller when grown in the garden compared with forest conditions.
- Young plants need to be watered once a week for first three months.
- Protect plants from wallabies and other animals.
- Mulch your plants well. This keeps the root zone cool and helps conserve moisture.
- Once established, rainforest trees can survive long dry spells. Though an occasional good soaking will help keep them healthy.
- Unlike other native plants, rainforest plants respond well to fertilizer if well watered in.
- Do not add lime or dolomite to the soil as these plants like to grow in acid soil.
- Rainforest plants respond well to pruning.



Propagation can be easy either from seed or cutting, though the germination rates of seeds varies widely some taking up to two years to sprout, so patience, persistence and basic knowledge of propagation is needed.

Attracting Wildlife

Rainforests support a wide diversity of wildlife. In your garden the blossoms of flowering plants will attract butterflies, other insects and nectar loving birds. The brightly coloured fruits of many rainforest species are attractive to birds, possums and other mammals. You can encourage small lizards, worms and frogs by providing dense pockets of growth, rocky areas and other hiding and breeding places. Plant a few thorny shrubs such as the Thorny Pea, to encourage small birds to live and nest there safely. Ensure water is safely available and avoid the use of poisonous chemicals.

For more information about these plants, the following references will be useful.

"Australian Rainforest Plants", Vols 1-6, by Nan and Hugh Nicholson. These books have wonderful photos of all the plants mentioned here, and many more.

"Sub-tropical Australia Native Gardens", by Far North Coast group, Australian Plants Society, NSW Ltd.

"Plants of the Forest Floor" compiled by Penny Watford, Illustrated by Margaret Elliott, published by Nullum Publications.

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North Coast Rainforest Plants in the Home Garden



Although many rainforest trees grow very tall or have dense canopy and buttresses which cover wide areas, there are some that are in fact quite small or can be pruned to fit comfortably in the smaller garden and make beautiful displays. By growing some of the rarer rainforest plants you can help with their survival.



Choose your plants carefully, situate in appropriate sites and, with moderate amount of care, you can have your own little bit of rainforest

A SELECTION OF RAINFOREST PLANTS SUITABLE FOR THE HOME GARDEN

Broad-leaved Palm Lily *Cordyline*

petiolaris This palm-like plant grows best in semi shade with moisture available and will reach a height of 2 -4 metres. However, it will grow in harsher conditions. The leaves are broad and in spring it produces bright red berries which stay on the plant for several weeks.

Brush Senna *Senna acclinus*

This pretty, fast growing shrub grows to 3 metres and has masses of yellow flowers in spring and summer. It was originally found all along the eastern seaboard from NSW Central Coast up into Queensland. It is now rarely found in the wild and is classified as endangered.

Davidson's Plum *Davidsonia jerseyana*

It is worth growing this tree for its foliage alone but it also produces edible fruit that form directly on the main stems. It can grow to 6 metres but with pruning can be kept smaller. It needs protection from frost and extreme heat when young but is hardy once established. It is a threatened species.

Flax Lily *Dianella caerulea*

This grass-like tufting plant is a beautiful addition to a rock garden or as an edging plant. It grows up to 1.5 metres high and wide and produces shiny purple edible berries in summer that are much loved by birds. It looks best if well watered and well mulched but will withstand harsher conditions.

Lillypilly *Syzygium ssp.*

They have foliage of dense dark green leaves right to the ground. At different times of the year they produce bright red new growth, cream fluffy flowers and colourful, edible fruit. Although some species can grow quite tall, if pruned annually many lillypillies can be kept to backyard size. Be guided by your nursery person as to the best variety for your situation.

Midyim Berry *Austromyrtus dulcis*

This small-leaved shrub has weeping characteristics and acquires a splendid bronze-coppery hue after a light pruning. Midyim bears small speckled light grey edible berries that attract the fruit-eating birds. Once established Midyims require only minimal watering and planted 2 metres apart can form a good hedge.

Native Frangipani *Hymenosporum flavum*

This attractive small tree can grow to a tall thin 10 metres but if pruned can be kept smaller and bushier. Its fragrant white flowers hang in loose terminal clusters and fade to yellow as they age. It grows in full sun or partial shade and will tolerate moderate frost.

Narrow-leaved Native Gardenia

Atractocarpus chartaceus

This shrub to small tree has shiny green leaves, white fragrant flowers and orange-red fruits. It can be pruned to shape and size and prefers shade and well drained soil. It will attract birds.



Rose Myrtle *Archirhodomyrtus beckleri*

This is an attractive weeping shrub with aromatic leaves, pink flowers and long lasting fruit which varies from red to yellow. It rarely grows beyond 3 metres and will thrive in less fertile soil, full sun or partial shade.

Small Bolwarra *Eupomatia bennettii*

This small shrub grows to less than 1 metre. It is an ancient, primitive plant and a threatened species. Its perfumed creamy flowers have deep red centres and last only one day. The flowers are pollinated by small beetles to produce fertile seed. Slow to establish, this interesting plant is best in partial shade with some moisture.

Thorny Pea *Desmodium acanthocladum*

This fine leaved plant is now found only in limited situations in the far north coast. Although a somewhat straggly, prickly shrub in the wild with a little pruning it forms a compact, pretty shrub which produces pink flowers throughout summer and is very attractive to small birds. It is classified as vulnerable.